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Houston police report spying request

HOUSTON, Tex. (AP) — The Houston Police Department has refused to supply further information on noncriminal activity to a nationwide intelligence co-operative after allegations that the co-op spied on ordinary citizens, police sources say.

The cooperative called the Law Enforcement Intelligence—LEIU—is headquartered in Long Beach, Calif., and operates a computerized information bank known as the Interstate Organized Crime Index.

That index, based in the California Department of Justice, has received $1,338,486 from the federal Law Enforcement Assistance Administration. About 230 police agencies in the United States and Canada belong to LEIU.

A high police source in Houston said his department resigned from LEIU when it was asked by another LEIU member to spy on a legitimate businessman.

The source said LEIU encouraged spying on ordinary citizens through its network of member police agencies in the United States and Canada and sanctioned the collection and filing of "gutter gossip."

Long Beach Police Lt. Ray Henry, recently elected national chairman of LEIU, said in a telephone interview that members exchanged information only on "traveling organized crime hoodlums."

He said it had "nothing to do with investigating political figures, churches, blacks or anything of that type."

He also said Houston has been "kicked out of LEIU ... terminated from membership" partly because of reports of illegal wiretapping by the Houston department's intelligence unit. The alleged wiretapping is under investigation by a federal grand jury.

Capt. B. G. Bond, chief of Houston criminal intelligence division, said Houston had resigned from LEIU but he declined further comment.

Police Lt. J. O. Brandon said Houston haad not resigned but was technically on probation. He said it is considering not reapplying for membership and is refusing LEIU requests which do not relate to criminal activity.

"The department has been asked for information of the marital history of noncriminals by other departments through the LEIU," Brandon said, adding Houston has refused to supply the information.

He said Houston also has refused a request by a California police department for a complete investigation of the wealth and worth of a person buying a chain of grocery stores in California which sold beer and would require a beverage license.

"We're not going to check ... (him) unless it is a criminal investigation," said Brandon.

Henry, a 22-year member of the Long Beach police force, said LEIU's membership includes "probably every major intelligence unit — county sheriff, district attorneys and municipal police departments — from New York to Los Angeles."

He said it is "a professional law enforcement organization, created in 1956 for the specific purpose of obtaining and exchanging information about organized crime. Each member is investigating as to its integrity and honesty before it is admitted to membership."